

Working Together to Challenge and Achieve

News from the Governors - Summer 2019

Another busy school year is slipping by and we are all looking forward to the summer break. On the governing body, this year, we said goodbye and a big thank you to Ian Crane and Beverley Derrett and Louise Guy, who we will miss and would like to pass on huge thanks for all of the support and work they have done for the governing body over the years they have been a part of the team.

We have several new governors who have recently joined us, so I thought I would share a few of our activities with you. Governors are also assigned to a committee to review the policies and talk about the school. We have three committees: a Personnel Committee that focuses on staff wellbeing, training, performance management, recruitment, etc. A Learning and Development Committee that focuses on learning, curriculum and all things pupil focussed. The third is the Finance and Resources Committee which looks at how we spend the money each year and value for money.

I often talk about my activities so I thought it was time to remind you that we are a team of people working together for the school. Here is a taster of what we have all been doing this year.

Angela Gage: Chair of Governors

One of my key tasks has been to introduce the new governors to the school and the workings of the governing body and supporting them to find their feet.

I have also been talking to a number of leaders about the work they have been doing to develop the school. At the beginning of the year, I spoke with Mr Parker about the training he was going to be offering to all staff around the way in which maths is taught, I also spoke with the EYFS leaders Mrs Kirk and Mrs Morris about their new outdoor area, their really strong end of year results and plans for this year. I also spent time learning about the Meta-Cognition training with Mrs Graham. She has been working with staff developing metacognition in the classroom which enables children to better understand how they learn and to give them strategies for tackling something new.

I spoke with Miss Nixon about the curriculum plans, as she works with the teaching staff to map what the school is teaching and what skills and knowledge children need to move forward each year towards the learning outcomes we want our children to have.

Last year, the governors and Mrs Dedicoat felt that the vision and ethos published on the website didn't reflect our school anymore. I spent a lot of time talking to parents, governors and staff about what Dale Hall means to them. You may have seen me at the parents

evening last year. The school staff also worked with our children to get their views. The problem then came; how to reflect the information in a coherent way to create a vision and ethos page on the website and make sense of it.

We are still working on the layout so it will probably change again. But whatever the layout, many of the themes are clear:

- *creative and innovative school,*
- *research led ie looking at what has worked well in other schools,*
- *reflective approach - this means reviewing and learning from past experience instead of moving relentlessly forward doing the same things,*
- *working with other schools,*
- *wellbeing of child and adult,*
- *coaching for staff,*
- *targeted and relevant continuous professional development ,*
- *child centered approach, immersive teaching, inclusive to all,*
- *good parental communication and engagement.*

Christine Hayward: Safeguarding Governor and Vice Chair

Christine is a retired Headteacher and has been with our governing body around 3 years now. She has recently become the vice chair of governors but her key role for a while now has been to ensure that our school has a culture of being safe. We know how hard the staff work to protect the children as Christine's role is to shadow their work and report back to the governing body so that we can fulfill our duty to ensure that the school is safe. Her role is so big that a few of us help her to carry it out.

We attend interviews and see how carefully the school interviews candidates and check that new recruits understand safeguarding. Christine attends IT awareness days and talks to staff, children and parents. She works with the head teacher and business manager to ensure that everything is done to keep our children safe. This term, I will be talking to children for her to make sure they are confident and know how to keep themselves safe. We know that Dale Hall is a safe school because of all the people who work together to make it so.

In September, Christine was a member of the 5 man governor team, who recruited Mrs Dediccoat into the head teacher role. She spends time each term chatting with a variety of staff about their work, talking with some of our newest teachers and with Mrs Allum about the work she does to ensure children know how to keep themselves safe online. This year, Christine has also been following and shadowing the project that Mrs Goodfellow has been running to develop our Teaching Assistants.

Martyn Reason, Vanessa Ransby and Alice Hardie: Finance Team

Martyn Reason has been with our school as a governor for many years and has taken on several roles. He has been Chair of Governors many times over the years. Currently, he is our key finance specialist which means that he reports back to the governing body each term on the school financial situation.

Martyn also chairs the Finance and Resources Committee and is very ably supported by Vanessa Ransby, an accountancy lecturer at Suffolk New College but better known in the school for her work over many years supporting and leading the PTA.

Alice Hardie is a new member of our governing body. Alice comes from an HR background so understand all of the costs relating to staffing a school and balancing our staffing needs as efficiently as we can within budget. The finance team take the opportunity to look in detail at our budgets and ask challenging questions in termly finance meetings and support the head and business manager to make the best use of our money.

Their work means that the main governing body only needs an overview of the financial situation. Every 3 months, Martyn talks the governing body through the financial situation and he or the head answer any questions. All three of our finance team members have busy careers and families so we really appreciate the time they give the school to support in this important area.

Ady Pugh: Health and Safety Governor

Ady has been with our governing body since summer 2018. He comes into school each term and reviews the health and safety of our school with the business manager. He checks to make sure that the building is safe and that fire checks have been done and many other things to ensure that our children are safe. He was delighted to report to the governing body that the new fencing had been done and that Mrs Dedicoat's hard work liaising with the local authority has paid off.

Ady also ensures that the website has all of the features and documents that it is supposed to have and again reports back to the head and the governing body about his findings. This helps both the head and governing body to ensure that everything is as it should be.

Ivy Scott: Special Educational Needs/ Disability (SEND)

Ivy is new to our governing body and we were delighted when she recently agreed to take on the inclusion role. Ivy is an experienced governor and a retired inclusion manager. She also worked for Essex Authority to support and advise schools so we were delighted that she was prepared to take on the role of SEND Governor.

She meets up with the school inclusion manager each term to provide support and challenge. Her role is to help the governing body ensure that our vulnerable children are protected and that they are thriving and growing in the school according to their development plans. She discusses the various initiatives the school puts in place and looks at the impact these initiatives are having. Ivy then reports back to the governing body so that we all know that these children are thriving in school.

Lesley Fisk, Trish Clarke and Sarah Sheridan

Lesley has been a member of the governing body for a while now and she gives us good insight into the day to day business of the school from being in the classroom. This year Lesley has been working alongside one of our newest Governors Trish Clarke. They have been learning about our new EYFS outdoor area and seeing the new hut being built that forms part of our forest school project. When they have finished looking at these changes they will report back to the governing body on what they have learned and the impact these school upgrades have made.

Being a new governor, Trish does not yet have a specific role but she has been developing her knowledge and working alongside Christine and I to look at the school data and asking questions around the SAT's results. She has also been helping to interview new governors and is working alongside Lesley Fisk to check out and report back to the governors' on the work that has been done to develop the outdoor areas.

Sarah is our newest governor, joining us only this term but she is not new to governance. So I am sure that next year she will be as busy as the rest of us. She will be helping me to chat with various groups of children about their safety and how safe they feel in school this term. We will be checking for the E-Safety leader Mrs Allum that the children can confidently tell us how they keep themselves online.

We will be reporting back our findings to Christine Hayward, the Safeguarding governor, so that she can keep the governing body informed on safeguarding matters.

Mrs Dediccoat, Miss Nixon and Mrs Goodfellow

The last three people who make up our governing body but are, of course, crucial, are the leadership team. Our Headteacher and the two Acting Deputies. The governing body work alongside our leadership team to ensure that the school has a strong vision and strategic plan to help it to grow, the money is well spent and the day to day experience and outcomes for our pupils are where we would like them to be.

I am immensely proud of our hardworking governing body, the way that we work together to challenge and achieve which bring me circling back to talking about our new vision statement on the website. Do check it out!

A big thank you to everyone who has worked so hard this year to answer the questions of the governors and taken the time to show us and explain your activities and to the governors, volunteers, who work so tirelessly on behalf of the school. There are a lot of tasks that governors have done this year that I have not had space to mention but please know that it was very much appreciated.

I hope everyone has a fabulous summer and wish those that are moving on from the school, both teachers and children my very best wishes.

If you have any comments, suggestions or would like to get in touch, do contact me on angela.gage@dalehallprimary.net

Angela Gage
Chair of Governors